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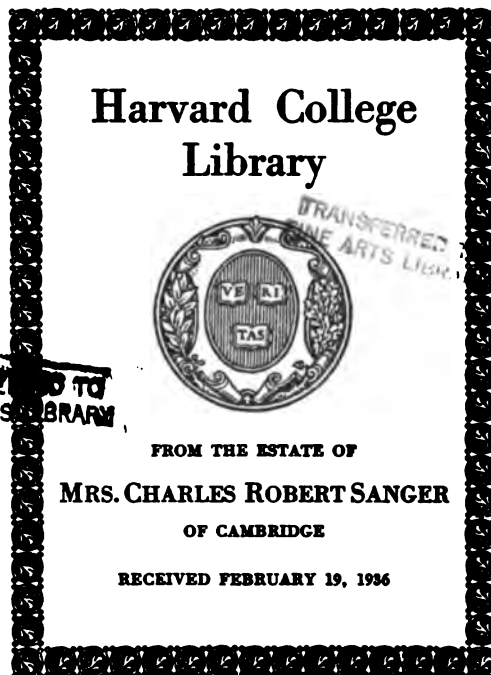
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GREAT PORTRAITS

Women



CHRISTINA, DUCHESS OF MILAN
HOLBEIN
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

GREAT PORTRAITS

Women

By Philip L. Hale

BOSTON, MASS.
BATES & GUILD COMPANY
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MONA LISA
LEONARDO DA VINCI
LOUVRE, PARIS

GREAT PORTRAITS:

Women

ALL histories of portraiture and of painting begin by telling how Kora, daughter of Butades the potter, sketched the silhouette of her lover, flung by the sun against some whitewashed wall. But, lightly avoiding such doubtful historical details, let us consider what the ancients did in the matter of portraiture; especially as regards women's portraits. We do not find much that is to the point in Greek work. There were sculptured portraits and to spare of the great men, the athletes, and the soldiers; but of women there is little to satisfy us. Doubtless the divine heads of goddesses that still exist for our delight were each one made from some Greek girl of perhaps greater beauty—of a beauty at least more personal and individual. For the very avoidance of the individual, the search for the typical, which was the note of Greek art, prevented these heads of god and goddess from looking like this or that man or woman. In their portraits of athletes there is enough individuality to show that they could indicate likeness, but we find few portraits of women.

There are certain encaustic paintings found in tombs of Cyrene which were probably portraits of dead women placed in tombs. But though these have their interest, they are yet rudely done compared to the masterpieces of painting that we know.

The Romans, on the other hand, had a very distinct gift for portraiture, and an interest in the matter. Whether most of the sculptors and art craftsmen in Rome were Greeks or not, the fact remains that they were dominated by the Roman ideal of portraiture. And some of these Roman portrait-busts are as remarkable as any that have been made. There are certain portraits of Roman Empresses—bitter, licentious, cruel, with thin lips and tired eyes; looking, indeed, singularly like the prints one sees in penny journals of this or that *soi-disant* leader of society—that are masterpieces in their way.

During the Middle Ages we catch no glimpse of portraiture. Even in the beginnings of the Renaissance there is curiously little of it. Giotto would put the portrait of his friend Dante into a fresco and paint himself near-by. But portrait-painting as an art in itself does not seem to have come into being much before the flowering-time of the Renaissance—the time of Da Vinci, of Raphael, Giorgione, Titian, Holbein, and Dürer. For, to begin with, practically all the artists

were employed by the Church, and it is not till the great and puissant seigneurs, in the advance of riches and luxury, began to order pictures for themselves that we find the beginnings of portraiture. This is not to say that one does not find vague renderings of great men, kings and popes, in the earlier times; but the attributions are doubtful and the likenesses are not authentic.

Apparently portraiture as a distinct art began a little earlier in Northern Europe than in Italy. At least we find masterly portraits by the Van Eycks in Belgium at a time when portraiture in Italy was in a less advanced stage. Indeed, in certain respects Van Eyck's portrait of Jan Arnolfini and his wife has never been surpassed. Modern criticism tends to show that there was a very considerable art in Belgium before the Van Eycks, and in this art portraiture apparently played a rather important place.

It was a northern custom, possibly more than of Italy, to introduce the portraits of the donors into a votive offering. At all events, one finds few of them in Italian art before Titian's 'Madonna with the Pesaro Family,' whereas they abound in early Belgian work. These portraits were made with a care and honesty that can hardly be surpassed. Indeed, the portraits are the most studied and sincere things about the pictures by Van Eyck and his contemporaries. Contrary to received

belief, many parts of their pictures are not particularly true to nature, nor is there any apparent effort to make them so. The high-lights on the gold embroidery are ticked off methodically, as if the artist were thinking of something else when he did them; but the little portrait heads are always painted with the greatest care and conscientiousness.

Antonello da Messina is supposed to have brought the perfected art of oil-painting to Italy. And until oil-painting was brought to an effective stage portraiture can hardly be said to have existed; for one could not very well paint a small picture in fresco. A portrait requires a comparatively small canvas, and an opportunity to compare it with the model; and despite the *prestigieux* painting of certain modern prodigies, a good portrait requires much time in the making. Now fresco must be done at once or not at all.

At all events, portraiture began in Venice at about the same time that men came to understand the management of oil-paints,—or, to be more exact, the skilful application of glazes in varnish over tempera under-painting,—and it is astonishing in how short a time they came to mastery in this art. Bellini's portrait of the Doge Loredano, one of his best efforts, must have been made within twenty or thirty years after the introduction of oil-painting; and Titian's 'Young Man



AN UNKNOWN PRINCESS
ATTRIBUTED TO LEONARDO DA VINCI
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TITIAN'S DAUGHTER, LAVINIA
TITIAN
BERLIN GALLERY

with the *Glove*, and *'La Bella,'* — in many respects the most beautiful portraits ever painted—were made only a generation or so after Antonello's day.

It is confusing to try to describe portraiture in these old days, because we have the Florentines, the Venetians, certain painters at Rome, not to speak of the strong Brescian School, Albert Dürer in Nuremberg, and Holbein, all working at much the same time. But one may dwell for a moment on some of the great and famous ones—and dwell, too, on some of the great ones still almost unknown, like Moretto of Brescia, the master of Moroni; Bronzino, whose singularly perfect if severe art has never been enough appreciated; Lorenzo Lotto, only recently become better known to us; Lorenzo di Credi, another of the unappreciated ones; Jacopo di Barbari, one of whose portraits has a haunting quality difficult to describe. There is Palma Vecchio, whose heads of women are lovelier perhaps than those of Titian, though of a certain lush beauty that is a little wearisome. There is Sebastiano del Piombo, in his portraits only less great than the very great. And then there are the very great as well, whose names run trippingly from the pen,—Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, these of the Venetians and of the rest of Europe, Raphael, Da Vinci, Holbein, Dürer. One never ceases to wonder at this shining and excellent constellation.

One of the portrait-painters who has never had justice done him is Bronzino. So much depends on the way that histories are written! Nevertheless, he was a remarkable artist, and particularly so as a portrait-painter. His portraits of women have a cold distinction which is hardly to be matched anywhere. He was fortunate in his models, Duke Cosimo dei Medici, Eleonora of Toledo, his wife, and their children. These subjects of his do not look very good with their Italian subtlety crossed by Spanish *morgue*; but nothing could be more distinguished than their faces as Bronzino painted them—cold, sad, filled with infernal pride.

Another painter of about the same time, who has become known only comparatively recently, was Lorenzo Lotto. With him portraiture was only, as it were, a by-product. Yet he produced some very fine portraits. He had a sense of decorative arrangement, and there is a certain wistfulness in his types that always gives them an interest. His portraits of women have a wistful distinction—different from the iron grace of Bronzino, yet very charming none the less.

Oscar Wilde has pointed out that Holbein's real quality was his sense of decorative arrangement; and this is true in a measure, although he also had a very remarkable power of attaining an enamel-like surface which is quite beyond any one now. It used to be sup-



VIOLANTE
PALMA VECCHIO
IMPERIAL GALLERY, VIENNA



PORTRAIT BUST OF AN UNKNOWN LADY
SCULPTOR UNKNOWN, FIFTEENTH CENTURY
LOUVRE, PARIS

posed that Holbein's draftsmanship and grip of character were his great qualities. It is something of a blow to one's enthusiasm to find that he used a camera lucida in making those wonderful drawings now at Windsor. This, doubtless, only helped him to record the silhouette and place the drawing well, for part of his art was a knowing and subtle deformation of the features; that is, he often made the eyes a little smaller, the nose a little larger, than they are apt to be in nature. This always gives a sense of likeness; indeed, the first fault to be eradicated from an amateur is his trick of making the eyes too large.

One cannot write of portraiture, more than of any other art, and leave out Da Vinci. He, more than any other, invented the processes and the point of view of modern art. When one studies the works of men as great and as different as Raphael, Giorgione, and Holbein one finds all of them leading straight to Da Vinci. Nay, more: when one examines the works of men farther afield—later in the artistic day, like Velasquez and Rubens—they lead by indirect and devious ways to the Master.

Da Vinci, so to say, invented chiaroscuro, or, as we are more apt to say, light and shade. No one had properly understood its laws before him. And since him little has been found to say other than what he said.

And in the matter of portraiture, as if to leave forever a model for all men who came after, he painted the one perfect portrait of the world. In the four years, if the story be true, that he labored over La Gioconda's smiling face, did he know — surely he must have known — that he was making a masterpiece that could not be surpassed?

It is a truth not often enough repeated that Da Vinci owed a great deal to Verrocchio. That famous smile which adorns fair Lady Lisa's face — which indeed illumines the face of all Da Vinci's feminine types, and, more than that, is the sign manual of all his school — this smile was invented by Verrocchio. One sees it on his 'David' — the same elusive, indefinable smile we have so often admired in Leonardo's master-works. Da Vinci of course did the thing much better, and was in no sense an imitator. Like Molière and other great men, he "took his goods where he found them;" yet it is interesting to trace the derivation of so famous a quality in his work.

Da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' and others of his works are smiling; but for the most part, one might say of the old portrait-work that it was grave, serene, serious. A portrait, to men and to women of that day, was a serious affair. It was the record of their existing; and existence, on the whole, was a serious matter to them. One often



HENRIETTA MARIA, WIFE OF CHARLES I.
VAN DYCK
ROYAL GALLERY, WINDSOR



MRS. SHERIDAN
GAINSBOROUGH
COLLECTION OF LORD ROTHSCHILD

sees—especially in German work—portraits of young men holding carnations in their hands. The carnation stood for thoughts of death, and the average sitter was not averse to letting the onlooker know that he looked on life seriously.

This is true to some extent in the portraits of women. They look on one calmly, with a tender gravity—unmoved, reserved. Serenity was the ideal of that day, rather than gaiety. And yet, with all their grave serenity, how little these old portraits give us of the dear dead ladies who lived and smiled so long ago and now are only dust and ashes! They must have laughed, too, these ladies of an older time—just as women do now; and there must have been deliciously ineffective movements of the hands, turns of the head, twistings of the body, of the sort that Helleu has rendered so sympathetically and Degas with such cruelty.

But to render these things was not the elder ideal. The old artists painted great ladies; and these ladies, and still more their mighty and jealous husbands, wished these portraits to look beautiful, indeed, but not to seem to smile on other men. Like Browning's Duke, they were quite ready to give orders that all smiles should cease. And indeed it is curious that while the smile of a beautiful young girl is a lovely thing, full of joy and innocence and unconscious purity, when it is painted, even

by the most cunning artist, one has a sense of a very different woman behind that set smile. It is partly that dried paint, being immovable, can never quite render mobility. But more than that: when in life a woman smiles in entrancing guise she smiles to this one man or to that; but when she smiles in a picture she smiles on all men, which, after all, is rather different.

So one may well believe that as Messer Zanobi del Gioconda saw the famous smile of 'Mona Lisa' slowly growing through the long four years, he did not wholly like it. More flashing smiles, it may be, were given to him—or perhaps on him she never smiled at all. She smiled on Leonardo all those long four years. Was it only because of the low lutes of love complaining behind the screens; or did she learn from him, from a word dropped here or there, something of the magic of her own laughter? Even this magic is much discussed. Many have cried aloud concerning the subtlety of this smile—of its meaning, of its cruelty, whether conscious or unconscious. Pater has devoted a wonderful page to this face and its smile.

Yet a flippant Frenchman has been found to depreciate this famous smile. "With good health," he remarks, "moderate good looks, and plenty of stupidity, one may make smiles like this." And while his attitude is not reverential, one perceives his meaning—even



MRS. SIDDONS
GAINSBOROUGH
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

that it contains a germ of truth. For what there is of mysterious or charming and of cruel in this smile is the thing that all women have. "La femme eternelle" smiles through those lazy eyes, neither better nor worse than in most of her other incarnations.

For Lady Lisa is not bad, neither is she good. The words her counterfeit presentment has to say are Womanhood, Life, and Light. People have read into Da Vinci's rendering all sorts of meanings which, no doubt, he never meant. Turner used to say that Ruskin saw in his pictures many intentions which the artist had never thought of. And so it may be doubted if Da Vinci thought of other things, during the long days that he labored, than rendering with marvelous subtlety the passage of light over the exquisite, subtile forms.

It remains that all virtuous women—unless they be trained artists—instinctively hate and fear Lady Lisa. It is because she smiles on all men. The story is told of a college-boy who had taken certain art courses in his curriculum and had learned to admire 'La Gioconda.' On returning home for vacation he brought a large autotype of the Smiling One and hung it in his room. After a few days his simple old mother got on a step-ladder, took down the picture, and put it face to the wall in the attic. She was not going to have that creature, she said, smiling down at her or on her boy.

Perhaps the most successful effort at painting a smile is Hogarth's 'Shrimp Girl.' He gained this success partly because his study is really merely a sketch. For it has suggestiveness—a quality much easier to gain in a sketch than in a finished production. The planes are hardly more than rubbed on. When Hogarth tried to get the same charm of smiling lips in a more highly finished head, as the 'Polly Peachum,' he failed.

But besides these things he has opened the fisher-girl's eyes very wide—a device which takes away the almost sneering expression of 'Mona Lisa,' an expression which many people particularly dislike. It is a question if any one ever does laugh as does this 'Shrimp Girl,'—for people almost always half close their eyes when smiling,—but at all events the effect which Hogarth has gained is very delightful.

Madame Vigee Lebrun also painted a successful smile. Her portrait of Madame Molé Raymond shows us a young woman with a gleaming, flashing smile which somehow never palls on us as do so many painted leers. What so wearisome as the smile of convention; or the bright, glad smile which is pulled on to do duty now and again? But this smile of Madame Molé-Raymond is a delightful one. It is full of youth, of good spirits, and of unconsciousness. And when one comes to think of it, this very unconsciousness may be the reason why



NELLY O'BRIEN
REYNOLDS
HERTFORD HOUSE, LONDON



THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER
ROMNEY
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

her smile is more "attractive"—as the cant word is—than the vastly more subtle 'Mona Lisa.' Mona Lisa, with all her perverse charm, is thinking of the on-looker. She calculates her effect; even her *insouciance*, her scorn, her indifference, is part of the effect. This little woman of Vigée Lebrun's smiles because she is joyous, with no apparent calculation of effect.

David, whom we often think of as the most severe and uncompromising of classicists, could paint a good smile none the less; and his portrait of Madame Seruziat and her child is a charming embodiment of goodness, and health, and happiness. The young woman's face is not exactly beautiful, but it is so charged with good humor and good will that one cannot but sympathize with it.

David's pupil Ingres also often made his women smiling. But they smiled in a bland, indifferent way, which, while it has its own charm, is not the charm of the 'Shrimp Girl,' or of Madame Molé. Rather, let us say, it is something between 'Mona Lisa' and a fine daguerreotype. They smile in the restrained way of La Gioconda, and yet there is nothing subtle or mysterious, still less perverse, in their smiles. Rather, they are the lazy smiles of beautiful, healthy French *bourgeoises*, without too much thought or temperament. It is one of the signs of Ingres's greatness that he was able to make

his portraits supremely interesting, despite these rather vapid smiles. Or it may be because of them; for his art was founded on the classic, and we remember the still, relentless, stupid smiles of the Greek goddesses, which have their charm notwithstanding.

This was perhaps what most of the great portrait-painters intended. They dimly felt, what Emerson later put in words, that "the gentleman is quiet; the lady is serene." Their ladies were serene. If they lacked something of the unstudied, unconscious charm of the 'Shrimp Girl,' they gained in distinction what they lost in naturalness. They smiled as certain women do when they go to a photograph-gallery, after sufficient practice before a glass. They perceived that it was pleasanter that the corners of the mouth should turn up rather than down; that, on the other hand, when they turned too high, when the teeth showed, something dangerously near a grimace was produced. In their effort to be ladylike they were willing that something of the woman should be lost.

And so at best most portraits are something of a compromise. They do not give us, as a rule, the woman—rather, the lady in her finest robes, as she chose to appear to the crowds. They give us the delicate ivory or enameled masque which she holds before her face in life's masquerade.



MISS FARREN
LAWRENCE
COLLECTION OF LORD DE GREY WILTON

Between the mighty men of the Renaissance and the almost modern men of England—Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney—come five great portrait-painters who cannot be passed by. Each in his way has made a mark on portraiture that still persists. Perhaps of these five great men, of Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Hals, and Van Dyke, Rubens is the one whose influence is least direct. And yet in certain respects it is the strongest influence of all. For through Van Dyke and his followers to the third and fourth, and to these latest, generations, the technique of Rubens still persists. We hear a great deal of the influence of Velasquez on Sargent and other moderns, and that influence exists. But the influence of Rubens, diluted though it be through Van Dyke, is stronger still. It may be said that every fashionable portrait-painter of this day owes more of his technique—at the last analysis—to Rubens than to any other man.

Rembrandt, it may be, shines more in his portraits of old women than in those of younger women. Though some of the heads of Saskia are interesting, they can hardly be called charming. There is a portrait by him in the Louvre, of Hendricke Stöffels, which is perhaps the handsomest of his pictures of younger women. With older women it seems that he was more successful. His portrait of Mrs. Elisabeth Baas has its quali-

ties. And there are various pictures supposed to be of his mother which, though rather wormy-looking, have a certain interest. It seems rather paradoxical, but one may say that though he often painted women well he was not primarily a painter of women.

One of the greatest influences in modern portraiture is Velasquez. Almost every modern portrait-painter of merit has studied him earnestly in Madrid or in London. Most of them have copied some of his works. And yet it remains that very few of them have caught his best or even his most characteristic qualities. There is a tradition about Velasquez, which is rather different than the real thing. Most modern portrait-painters swear by him and then paint in the manner of Franz Hals, of Van Dyck, or of Lawrence — or in a combination of all three. Modern portrait-painting is petulant, over-accented, violent. Velasquez's work was suave, fused, and controlled.

Velasquez, though in many ways the greatest portrait-painter of all, does not often appear as a painter of women. Perhaps this was because he rendered with such relentless verity that the fair, frail creatures came off but hardly at his hands. Seriously, however, the reason was that in Spain, with its half Oriental notions, it was not much the custom to have portraits of women — excepting always of great ladies like the for-



THE SHRIMP GIRL
HOGARTH
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

eign queen and others. So it happens that in Velasquez's work we find a few queens and a few studies of his wife or his daughters. At the same time, curiously enough, Velasquez set the fashion for all modern portraiture. The portrait of to-day is built on the tradition of Velasquez much more than on that of Holbein or of Titian.

Franz Hals, too, has had a great influence on Modern Art, particularly on portrait-painting. Perhaps his influence was stronger twenty years ago than it is to-day. It was through admiration of his direct handling that there came about that curious fashion in painting known as the "square-touch" or the "square-brush" manner. It was carried to lengths of which Hals never dreamed; and yet, at the same time, it is true that Hals came of a school of technicians whose chief preoccupation was skilful handling. Those who speak of Hals's unaffected manner do not pause to consider that brilliant execution was the sign manual of his school; that his work was above all things considered and self-conscious.

One does not think of Hals as primarily a painter of women; rather does one recall his portraits of men. Yet he has painted some fine old women; and once or twice, notably in a portrait owned by Mr. Widener, he has painted much of the charm of freshness of a young woman.

Van Dyck, although a very brilliant and skilful painter, has a good deal to answer for in the matter of portraits—both of men and of women. Before his day painters had always made their portraits as “like” as possible. Even Raphael, who in his decorative work painted nature not as it was, but as he conceived it ought to be, was in his portraits a miracle of careful and conscientious observation. Titian, when he painted a fat woman, painted her fat; there was no apparent effort to modify the type.

But Van Dyck deliberately made his figures more slender and elegant than they really were. Especially was he a sinner in the matter of hands. He had handsome models, whose hands were of aristocratic mold, and from these he painted most of the hands in his portraits of women. He made the arms longer; he made the faces invariably oval; in fact, he introduced a number of mannerisms which have remained the stock in trade of English portrait-painting.

For English portrait-painting derives straight from Van Dyck. Gainsborough on his death-bed said, “We are all going to heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company.” That was his unconscious way of expressing his debt to the Fleming—although through his first master, Gravelot, he would seem to have owed something to Watteau as well.



COUNTESS POTOCKA
ARTIST UNKNOWN
ROYAL COLLECTION OF ENGRAVINGS, BERLIN

It was not merely that the English painters admired Van Dyck; but his pictures, hanging on the walls of great English houses,—together with those of his pupil Sir Peter Lely, who, after his feeble fashion, continued the Van Dyck tradition,—these pictures reacted on their aristocratic owners and doubtless formed for them a standard of taste; so that when they came to be painted themselves they wished their new portraits to have as much as possible the *allure* of Van Dyck's brilliant presentments. Therefore the portrait-painters tried, each after his own fashion, to paint in the manner desired. It follows from this that English portraiture, while it has its undoubted charm, has never worshipped Truth as Truth. This is particularly true of the portraits of women; for the men, one guesses, may have said in Cromwellian tones, "Paint me as I am," and submitted to a fairly veracious rendering of their virile charms.

The women—one does not know just why—often prefer to be painted as they would like to look. One does not know just why, because women, as Stevenson points out, are essentially far more truthful than men. In the great things of life their actions are truer; and yet—perhaps this is one of their charms—they permit themselves little fibs to soften the ills of life. One has seen charming old ladies cheat at solitaire; nobody suf-

ferred but themselves, and they, curiously enough, enjoyed their self-deception.

And oh — though every vow be vain —
Deceive — deceive me once again!

What plain woman has ever admitted to herself that she is quite so unseductive as she really is? If she can stand in a vague light, with good clothes on, well equipped, she lays the flattering unction to her soul that she is not wholly ill-looking. She hopes—perhaps we all do—that she is what she desires to be.

So in the matter of portraiture many women feel that they would like to be painted rather prettier than they really are. But when they permit themselves to be they become a reproach and a mocking. How many nice old ladies has one not seen in portraits bedizened of pearls and decked in diamonds, with enameled breast and neck obscured by fichus, painted by Carolus or by Chartran something after the guise of a vicious fashion-plate—nice old ladies, who in humble dress, with quiet surroundings, would have radiated peace and motherliness!

Whistler knew this when he painted his famous portrait of his mother. Not the least charm of this is the perfect taste with which the old lady—a beauty in her day—is firmly pushed into her age and class.

It would not be amiss if sumptuary laws existed now

as in the old days—not only for the ordinary costume of women, but for their costume when sitting for portraits. There is no woman living of whom an interesting and impressive portrait could not be made if she were properly dressed, posed with the right gesture and in the right light, and painted with sincerity and conviction. But very likely she would not be beautiful.

So many women, lovely in soul at least, wish to be painted as the beautiful ones of this world! Thackeray makes endless fun of Sir Tomaso Lorenzo, as he pleasantly nicknamed Sir Thomas Lawrence. In 'The Rose and the Ring,' he describes, and illustrates with clever sketches, how the ugly princess really looked and how Sir Tomaso rendered her. No end of trouble arose from this in the story.

But in real life, as well, this habit of flattery brings about bad results. A woman wishes to be painted so beautiful that her sons and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation may look on her with pleasure and think that their ancestress looked thus and thus. But one is not so much interested that one's ancestress should have been of a vapid beauty as that she would have been good and kind and true. Imagine a man looking at a portrait of some female forebear by Sir Peter Lely or by Sir Thomas Lawrence and speculating on her worth! It is not a pleasant thought.

The French seem to have been able to combine a good deal of truthfulness with charm. One feels that those charming little Princesses and Maids of Honor by Nattier must have looked very much as he painted them. And yet how pretty and delightful he has made them! With Rigaud and with Largillière there is not so much charm; but, on the other hand, there is a good deal of truth and a certain style—or at least stylishness—not to be despised.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the French and the English portraits is shown in the structure of the heads. One says “structure,” and yet in the English heads there is really no construction at all. They were painted more or less in a manner which Stuart also used, and which our own Sargent is said at times to employ; that is, the shape of the head was first painted in a vague, egg-like form; then, when the oval had been modeled to quite an extent, the features were gradually added, the accents and high-lights being put in last.

The advantages of this method were that it was very quick, and that it helped the artist to keep his effect simple. One only has to look over Reynolds’s or Romney’s engagement-book to see what an enormous amount of portraits they painted in a year, and how necessary it was for them to have a rapid method.

The disadvantages of this same method were that



MADAME MOLÉ-RAYMOND
VIGÉE LEBRUN
LOUVRE, PARIS

one was apt to leave out a number of important gradations. Having gained the general appearance and roundness of the head, one was apt to neglect the delicate little modulations — so charming and so difficult to render — which one notes in a pretty woman's face. For instance, the setting of the eye; the way in which the nose merges into the cheek and eye-socket; the immensely difficult modulations around the lips and at the end of the nose; — these things were simply left out. Much was lost that a little might be gained.

And by the same token the color suffered as well. For the best colorists, as Hunt has pointed out, are apt to render detail skilfully; and, conversely, the English painters, by over-simplifying their heads, lost much of the delicate beauty of color that lies in a woman's face. They painted in the head and neck and shoulders largely of a handsome yellowish tone. Perhaps the lips were touched in a thought too red; the cheeks, a flush too rosy. But the exquisitely subtle grayish-greenish tones about the lips; the amazingly difficult delicate reddish *nuances* about the nose, which always exist in the prettiest women; the slightly *bistrée* tones about the eyes, which make the Irish say of a beauty that her eyes were touched in with a dirty finger; these things are quite left out. Hazlitt pointed out a hundred years ago that there lay a danger in over-simplification, and one feels

this in some of the most beautiful works of Reynolds and of Romney.

The Frenchmen, on the other hand, were always good workmen; and a curious passion for truth, which always persists in the Gallic mind, despite the easy English assumption that all Frenchmen are liars, never permitted them to slight the features. Perhaps the eyes, the lips, the end of the nose, are sometimes made too hard—at least, they are never slighted. What they lost in suggestiveness they gained in actuality. And, after all, one wants a portrait to look “like.” The portraits by Maurice Quentin de la Tour, for instance, are not so lovely as the prettiest of those by Gainsborough or by Romney, but one gets a better idea of what the women who posed for these pastels were like.

And, after all, though it may be well to know that one’s ancestress was soft and smooth and had a white skin, one would like to know, too, whether she had any brains; whether her eyes were kind; and if sorrow ever moved her enough to leave a line upon her face. The most beautiful painting of a woman in the world has not the same charm for a man as the modest features of his own mother. And so with us these changelings of a later birth are not the same as the real ancestress painted with all her good qualities and all her defects just as they appeared.



MADAME RÉCAMIER
DAVID
LOUVRE, PARIS

It is hard to say just where modern portraiture began. Possibly the exact moment was on that day when Reynolds returned from Rome and opened a studio in a large room in Saint Martin's Lane, and began the painting of portraits. Reynolds, to the ordinary person, is perhaps the most famous of portrait-painters. One hears most about him; at least, we of the English tongue do, because the English, naturally enough, admire him very much, and we as naturally read English more easily than we do French or Italian. And yet there have been many greater painters than Reynolds—even many greater portrait-painters. Reynolds, indeed, had many serious faults. He did not draw very well, and his color, though agreeable, was not very true. But he had this quality,—that he had a sense of picture-making; of putting a thing on the canvas so that it would appear well; and he had, too, a rather remarkable quality of combining his gift of making pleasing things—that people would like—with the “Grand Style” that he had picked up in Italy. Gainsborough, looking at his pictures, said, “D—n him, how *various* he is!” And this is the best and the worst thing that could be said of him.

Artists, for the most part, like Gainsborough better than Reynolds. Not only are his pictures, to them, more subtle, more *raffiné*, but his character is more

sympathetic. Gainsborough, indeed, was the personification of the artistic temperament. His virtues and his very faults made him the more an artist. He had many very serious technical faults, but he is important in our study because he is one of the half dozen greatest painters of women. Other painters, Da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, have painted women, and painted them well—in their stride, as it were—while they were doing other things. Gainsborough really could do nothing else. Women and children were what he painted best. His technique was sleazy and washy; his drawing, though fluent, was not very incisive; but his portraits shiver with distinction; nothing more *raffiné* was ever done. His women are not exactly as women are—not perhaps quite as we would have them; but they look as if they had just stepped from some eighteenth-century garden, a stain of netted peaches on their lips; and in the slender oval of their faces and in their long, frail bodies there is a pathetic suggestion of delicacy, as in the 'Mrs. Graham;' of early decay.

One of the most mysterious characters in the history of art is Madame Vigée Lebrun. Her very commonplaceness in many things makes her the more mysterious. In her life of herself she is full of her interviews with queens, of intrigues to do her injury as an artist or as a woman; but of her training as an artist, or of what



DOÑA ISABEL CORBO DE PORCEL
GOYA
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

she thought when she painted, of what she tried to express, she says almost nothing. And yet, she exists as, on the whole, the most remarkable woman painter who has ever lived. Certainly she was the best equipped. And not a word to say where she learnt what she knew, or what ideals she tried to express. While she is, of course, by no means among the very great painters, she does rank among the half dozen of this world who have had the gift, or the knack, of painting women as they desire to look,—as men would have them look.

Perhaps, as a woman, she understood women better than most men do; indeed, the great men painters of women—Da Vinci, Watteau, Gainsborough—have been half woman themselves in their sensitiveness and intuition, though Da Vinci added to this instinctive sense an intellect that scorned the intuition he had.

At all events, it cannot be denied that Madame Vigée Lebrun has painted three or four very remarkable portraits of women. One may call them—as, indeed, they are—tight, academical, smooth. No matter—they stick in one's head; one cannot forget them. Madame Molé-Raymond, with her flashing smile, is one of the half dozen portrait-shapes—stencils, so to say—that are repeated again and again.

A man singularly little known by the general public is Ingres. That is, when one considers his remarkable

achievement and his still more remarkable influence, it is curious that when one speaks of him to the average "laymen" they have never heard of him, as they have heard of Rosa Bonheur or of Landseer. And not the least of Ingres's talents was his skill in portraiture. His portraits had all the incisiveness of Holbein, with more understanding of light and shade, and a certain science of simplification that was all his own. Indeed, he succeeded in a field where the English portraitists failed; for his pictures give the appearance of great simplicity, though every *nuance* of modeling or of design is carefully observed.

It is a far cry from Ingres to Rossetti; but Rossetti, though a reactionist, is so significant in his work of certain aspects of *modernité* that it seems necessary to speak of him. His drawing is so weak, his technique is so sleazy and thin, his whole intention so literary, that we, artists most of all, are apt to forget that he had one remarkable gift. That is, he felt, and in spite of his technical defects was able to render, many of those *nuances* of femininity which the more robust Old Masters had either overlooked or ignored. He saw and felt acutely the constant weariness of woman—her weakness, her longing. The old men painted the one woman among a thousand who is perfectly healthy, self-contained, and cheerful; who finds life good. Rossetti saw

not the other ninety-and-nine, but the many—even though his particular type was wholly unique—who suffer, who are always tired, whose desire is for a vague unknown, which, even if it were brought to them, they could not realize.

They make one think of Heine's lines:

Then, when thine arms shall encircle me fast,
Then I shall die of longing.

It has often been pointed out that this was a morbid sense in Rossetti, and no doubt it was. But in our study of women's portraits it is very valuable, as showing a development into something different, more subtle, in its way truer. And it is curious that Rossetti, who, in his technique, and especially in his subjects, was reactionary, should in this particular quality have been very modern.

And it may be that modern portrait-painting, following different lines of technique, will, in the end, come with him to express something of the more subtle *nuances* of femininity. While avoiding his morbidness, it may come to be more sensitive, more sympathetic, than was the work of the older men. Rossetti's women never smile; and perhaps the women in the portraits to come will not smile so often. Talleyrand said that speech was to conceal thought. And too many smiles are put on to conceal pain, grief, *ennui*. We hear a

great deal about "soul" in painting. Perhaps women will come to be willing to have their soul seen as it is—if that could come about—rather than looking through the eyes of a grinning mask. And yet, this fixed smile is not their fault, either; for the world—rightly enough, no doubt—likes glad looks, hates tears. A smile is an asset in buying success. Only, if portraiture is to mirror the real, the very real person, we perceive that this same famous smile often blurs the looking-glass.

The invention of photography has had a great influence on portrait-painting, and the art of picture-making will never be quite the same again. It has affected the general public more than the artists; that is, people are less easily satisfied now than in the old time. They expect more of the artist. Photographs have taught them to know much more how they really look than they ever knew before. In the time of Copley or of Stuart almost any young artist of moderate talent could earn at least a livelihood by making likenesses. When all else failed he took to portraiture. Now, unless a man has a great reputation as a painter, people will hardly take a portrait as a gift. The famous portrait-painters prosper perhaps as much, or more, than ever; but it is not now the fashion, as it was in an elder day, for every family of importance to have their several



SARAH BERNHARDT
BASTIEN-LEPAGE
PROPERTY OF GEORGES PETIT, PARIS

portraits painted. If they want portraits they go and have themselves photographed.

Emerson said that so long as the Anglo-Saxon race lasted horse-racing and portrait-painting would endure. He would now have to modify his statement in such a way as to suggest photography instead of painting. Portrait-painting, which was in a certain sense almost a necessity, has now become a luxury.

Hawthorne, in one of his 'Twice-Told Tales,' has an amusing conceit about a portrait-painter who could read the very souls of his sitters and record what these spirits said. This idea of psychology in portraiture is a favorite one with writers — perhaps more with writers than with artists. Henry James, in his story 'The Liar,' tells another tale of divination by the painter.

It is to be doubted whether these things occur in real life. The greatest psychologist in the world might be a very poor portrait-painter. On the other hand, the portraitist might, and often does, build up his head plane by plane, piece by piece, each in its proper relation of form and color to the rest, with no particular preoccupation with, or interest in, the psychology of the problem at hand.

It is true that the born portrait-painter does have an intuitive sense of what goes to make a likeness, but

that is rather another affair. It is a matter, partly, of the general map or silhouette the head makes, partly the right coördination of one part with another, and partly, too, the selection of characteristic bits to be emphasized,—the bushy eyebrow, the long upper lip, the deep-set eyes, or whatever they may chance to be. It is this sense that makes the successful caricaturist; and it must be said that every good portrait-painter has in him the ability to make caricatures. One often hears this denied; nevertheless, it is true. All the greatest portrait-painters from Leonardo down to John Sargent have had this gift of caricature.

The English manner of suggesting an egg-shaped mass and then working the features into that was almost fatal to likeness; because, as we have seen, one of the most important things about likeness is preserving the character of the general map of the head. One woman will have a long, oblong face; another, a round one. Neither can be well suggested by an oval. The heads of Gainsborough's women, for instance, are almost always a long oval. It is impossible to believe that all the sitters in England had heads of that shape. Despite this self-imposed handicap, he had enough sense of character to somewhat differentiate his types.

To speak again of psychology. It is much to be doubted whether many portrait-painters—fashionable

or otherwise—are deeply versed in that puzzling science. One questions whether many of them have read Darwin's book on expression, or have studied Dr. Dujardin's experiments, or have ever read Sir Charles Bell's famous "Anatomy of Expression," which, truth to tell, is now rather out of date. Much less—so one would guess—have they read the recondite works of Kant, Mill, Spencer, of Drobisch, Waitz, and Wundt. Not that it is particularly desirable that they should do so; but if a man is ignorant of the principles of psychology, if he does not even know the muscles which in the face express emotion, how is he to make a portrait which expresses psychologic truths? The fact is, the term is used very loosely. Some painters study the forms more closely than others, and they are called psychologists. The most that a painter can do is to copy the forms; and if he does it faithfully a something beyond his understanding is now and then created.

And yet in another sense we are all psychologists. Certainly not in a scientific way; still, from the beginning of life, we are constantly seeking to read the faces of others. And after all, how little we can decipher! We look on the face of our best friend and cannot tell whether he thinks scorn of us or no. Still, in a primitive way we are psychologists. A smile to us means one thing; a frown, another. It is in this primitive sense

that portrait-painters, too, practise an embryo reading of the soul. Through long observation, it may be that they have come to understand the twists and turns of the face better than does the average man. But such knowledge as they have is for the most part purely empirical. Perhaps it is better so; at all events, so it is.

Besides, even this rather slight knowledge is hardly necessary. Because, as we have seen, mankind and womankind prefer in portraits to be on dress parade—either with a misleading smile or with a calm serenity that hides one knows not what of pain, of *ennui*, longing, or regret.

When one comes to make a selection of twenty famous portraits such as these, it is astonishing how difficult the task becomes. It is not that there are not fine portraits enough and to spare. But the effort here has been to select something more than those; that is, to select pictures of the haunting sort, that will not let one rest—or forget. It is not that these are always the finest; in certain instances, as in the ‘Countess Potocka,’ the portraits are not particularly well made. Yet there is a certain something about them—not necessarily artistic—which makes people look and remember. Sometimes they remember them pleasantly; sometimes not. ‘The Parson’s Daughter’ is the sort of thing that all the

world loves. On the other hand, a vastly more able picture, 'La Gioconda,' is antipathetic to many. But at least one remembers both pictures. There is no forgetting them; and so it is with certain others.

Just what the quality may be that makes for a famous portrait is hard to say. Some of the very greatest painters have made portraits, to be sure,—and admirable ones at that,—yet their pictures never go home to the hearts of people. This is nothing against them, one simply notes the fact. On the other hand, a rather mediocre artist like Madame Vigée Lebrun has produced two or three portraits that one sees everywhere. They are as common in reproductions as is the 'Victory of Samothrace.' A curious instance of this indefinable quality is the before-mentioned portrait of the famous Countess Potocka. It was painted by an artist so obscure that no one knows his name. And yet in reproduction it is one of the most popular portraits in the world. Somehow its maker has expressed that look "of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire."

It is significant to note that the interesting periods of a woman's life—speaking from a pictorial point of view—are at the moment when she turns from childhood to womanhood, and at life's ending. It is difficult to

imagine an exciting picture of a middle-aged woman. One recalls just one, Antonio Moro's portrait of Queen Mary Tudor. But surely this is the only one. On the other hand, there are many fine examples of old women's portraits, and of course very many portraits of young women.

What would one have of a woman's portrait? That it should suggest something of her charm; something of the subtleties, the *nuances*, of expression; something, too, of the exquisitely delicate color changes of the face. And more: that it should have about it a certain suggestion of vitality, as if the seated or standing figure were about to move the next moment—or at least could move if she desired it. These qualities, of course, are among the hardest things to suggest in Art; and it is astonishing how many really fine portraits are fine without any of these merits. They are fine because they make us sure that the character is well observed; that the forms are firmly modeled. Sometimes, too, they are fine despite manifold faults because they make a good picture—because the general *allure* of the thing is agreeable.

But through study of the old masters, and study of photographs, and most of all the study of the living model, one can see that portraiture still has room for



MADAME DESTOUCHE
INGRES
LOUVRE, PARIS



THE ARTIST'S MOTHER
WHISTLER
LUXEMBOURG, PARIS

development. The great portrait of the future may have all the old masters' serenity and decorative effect, something of a photograph's exact detail without its distortions; and yet, besides all this, there may be a delicacy in the perception of color relations and of color shifts, a greater understanding of psychology than we have seen, and a sense of *nuances* of expression that have never yet been wholly realized.

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